ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT—22 FEBRUARY 1988

Lok Sabha	—	**Eighth Lok Sabha**
Session	—	**First Session of the Year**
President of India	—	**Shri R. Venkataraman**
Vice-President of India	—	**Dr. Shanker Dayal Sharma**
Prime Minister of India	—	**Shri Rajiv Gandhi**
Speaker, Lok Sabha	—	**Dr. Bal Ram Jakhar**

Honourable Members,

It is a privilege for me to address you for the first time as President. I welcome you to this session of Parliament. I particularly felicitate the new members, who for the first time, include a representative from the newly constituted constituency of Daman and Diu. I give my good wishes to the people of Goa, which has attained statehood.

A few weeks ago, we were deprived of the presence of a great soul. A link with the stirring days of the freedom struggle is no more. A close associate of Mahatma Gandhi, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan was a symbol of the spirit of non-violence and secularism. His life was a saga of unsurpassed courage and sacrifice. I also pay tribute to the other colleagues who have left us, including the former Prime Minister Shri Charan Singh, and Shri M. G. Ramachandran, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, who through his farsightedness worked for and strengthened national unity.

Our vision of India is of a land whose unity and integrity are invulnerable to external threats or internal weaknesses:

- where the ideals of democracy, secularism and socialism enshrined in our Constitution are fully realised;
- where social justice prevails, with equality of opportunity for every human being;
- where science and technology have helped to wipe out poverty and disease;
- where economic development does not exhaust the bounties of nature, but creates wealth in harmony with it;
- where industrialisation and modernization are fused with moral and spiritual values;

- where all religions and cultures flourish in an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation.

We want an India whose interaction with the nations of the world is dedicated to peace and international cooperation, and a new world order based on equality, freedom and justice.

In the last 40 years we have progressed along this path, illumined by Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. We shall adhere to it, come what may, with the determination and courage instilled in us by Indira Gandhi.

The struggle for independence was the precursor to the struggle for self-reliant progress, the struggle for social emancipation, the struggle to recover for India her traditional, historic place in the vanguard of human civilization. Our achievements have been notable. More notable still has been the consistency of our endeavour, the sincerity of our effort, the dedication and hard work of our people. Our primary goal has been the rapid amelioration of poverty and its eradication. The key to the alleviation of poverty lies in a rapid and sustained expansion of employment opportunities in both rural and urban areas. Our strategy has been to combine direct intervention in favour of the poorer segments of society through asset-creation and employment-creation anti-poverty programmes, with faster and more diversified growth, underpinned by a massive programme of quality education. We seek to realize the full potential of our unmatched human resources while harmonizing the country's educational profile with the growth requirements and employment needs of our economy. We have moved purposefully towards the achievement of our aims. The pace of progress has markedly quickened in the last seven years. The Eighth Plan must provide for even faster growth, the maximization of employment opportunities, and the vigorous reduction of regional disparities. We need both a higher rate of growth and a composition of growth which matches the basic needs of our people and the evolving requirements of our economy and society.

We have pursued growth within the framework of two crucial parameters: the freedom of our country and the freedom of our people. To this end, we have built strong institutions to guarantee the democratic rights of our citizens and to overcome the many challenges to our independence, integrity and nationhood. Efforts have been mounted, from outside and within, to subvert, suborn and undermine our democratic political system. Our ever-vigilant people have thwarted all such efforts.

The failure of the rains has tested the resilience of our economy and the strength of our purpose. Our farming community, and indeed the nation as a whole, has responded to this serious economic challenge in a most heroic manner. The people are co-operating magnificently with the Government. The nation's economic performance is a tribute to the soundness and strength of our development strategy.

With a determined and concerted national effort, the challenge of terrorism is being met in Punjab and elsewhere. Following President's Rule in Punjab, the law-enforcing agencies have harnessed the resurgent will of the people of Punjab and mounted a determined campaign against misguided anti-national elements. The foremost task is to crush terrorism and isolate the secessionists. The terrorists have lately stepped up their depredations. They have to contend with the high morale, regenerated professionalism and strict vigilance of our security forces. They also have to contend with the people's refusal to be browbeaten or cowed. There can and will be no compromise over the nation's integrity and unity. In the search for a non-violent political solution of the problem within the framework of the Constitution, Government stands ready for a dialogue with all those who eschew violence. The nation mourns the loss of innocent lives. We salute those who have laid down their lives in the cause of national unity.

In Tripura, the extremists stepped up their campaign of terror. The escalated violence and mounting loss of innocent human lives left Government with no option but to declare Tripura as a disturbed area. We are determined to put down violence there.

We are unflinching in our determination to root out communalism, fundamentalism and other fissiparous tendencies. Committees of the National Integration Council have been active in devising measures for the promotion of communal harmony. The Centre and the States must make sustained efforts to implement the Fifteen Point Programme for the welfare of the minorities.

We are committed to the elimination of the consequences of centuries of ostracism, discrimination and oppression. We have reorganised the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and strengthened the office of the Commissioner. The importance we attach to the welfare and development of these disadvantaged sections of our society is reflected in the Seventh Plan outlay of over Rs. 14,000 crores in their favour. It is a matter of particular satisfaction that coverage of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes under the IRDP has reached 41 per cent, far exceeding the target of 30 per cent.

During the year elections were held in Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, West Bengal, Haryana, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Tripura.

The provisions of Article 356 of the Constitution were invoked in Tamil Nadu in view of the situation that developed there in January. Elections in the State are proposed to be held at an early date.

The Commission on Centre-State relations which was set up under the chairmanship of Shri Justice R.S. Sarkaria has submitted its report. The views of Parliament, States and members of the public will be taken into account before arriving at decisions.

The National Policy on Education is our pledge to the coming generations and our gauge to the future. Quality education for all is the key to national development. A programme of action for the implementation of the Policy was presented to Parliament in 1986. Major steps were taken during the year in pursuance of the Policy. Our concern for primary education is paramount. Operation Blackboard was launched to improve the quality of instruction and the infrastructure in primary schools. Particular attention is being paid to the educationally backward States. The massive programme for training 5 lakh teachers annually has been continued. A national core curriculum is being developed to impart an awareness of our heritage and a sense of national cohesion. The number of Navodaya Vidyalayas has risen to 206. An analysis of admission tests to these schools for 1986 shows that 41 per cent of the selected children belong to families below the poverty line. 77 per cent come from rural areas, and the percentage of children from Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is much higher than their percentage in the total population. The scheme for free secondary stage education for girls is now being implemented in all States. A comprehensive scheme has been drawn up for the vocationalisation of education. Government are working on a number of measures to enhance the quality of higher education and technical education.

The promotion of the small family norm is a high national priority. Last year we recorded 20 million acceptors of contraceptive coverage : the highest level ever achieved. The problems of family welfare and health are interlinked. They are, therefore, being tackled through an integrated set of measures. Immunisation programmes have accelerated over the last two years.

The emancipation of women from all forms of prejudice, discrimination and abuse, deprivation and oppression is a national duty and a national task. Their full and equal participation in the nation's life is a national imperative. Government have prepared a perspective plan up to the year 2000 to deal with the problems of women. Government have also reconstituted the National Committee on Women to review and advise on policies and programmes for women. A National Commission has been established to look into the problems of women in the unorganised sector. Its report is expected shortly.

Following the barbaric incident at Deorala, the Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987, was passed. Government are determined to root out this evil practice. These efforts should be backed by the widest possible mobilisation of public opinion.

A very significant feature of our changing society is the transformation taking place in the country's demographic profile. As a people, we are growing younger. Therefore, meeting the needs of our youth and fitting

them for their role in the nation's life are matters of high priority. The Nehru Yuvak Kendras have been galvanised into a high level of activity. Intellectual and physical discipline, and a sense of enterprise and adventure, are being instilled in lakhs of our boys and girls through the-NSS, the Bharat Scouts and Guides and the National Cadet Corps. The Sports Authority of India has done commendable work in affording opportunity to the athletic prowess of our youth.

Harmonious industrial relations were a significant feature of the year. We compliment both labour and managements on their constructive attitudes. We want to promote a participatory management culture in industry. Government intend to bring forward a comprehensive Bill on industrial relations and a Bill for major changes in the Employees' Provident Fund Act.

While segments of our workforce have organized themselves to secure and safeguard their rights, the overwhelming majority of our working people are unorganized and, therefore, exploited. Data about their conditions of work is inadequate and action to ameliorate their lot unsatisfactory. We are deeply concerned about their welfare and progress. We are committed to the improvement of their conditions. We have, therefore, appointed the National Commission on Rural Labour. We have also framed a National Policy on Child Labour. Voluntary agencies are being associated in the identification and rehabilitation of bonded labour.

The Twenty Point Programme has infused new hope in the countryside. It accounts for 30 per cent of the total Plan outlay for the current year. IRDP, NREP and RLEGP are our major instruments in the attack on rural poverty. In the last seven years, IRDP has assisted 23.4 million families belonging to weaker sections and other backward groups below the poverty line. Women now constitute 16 per cent of the beneficiaries. During the period April 1987 to January 1988, NREP and RLEGP generated 471 million mandays of employment.

Water for the first time has been recognized as a vital national asset. The new National Water Policy derives from the national consensus on this point. This paves the way for effective planned development and efficient utilization of our national water resources.

The Ganga Action Plan has caught the nation's imagination. It is in full swing in 25 towns and cities. The protection of the environment has emerged as a major national priority. Environmental standards have been notified for 24 priority industries. Parliament has already amended the law on air pollution. Stringent legislative action is planned to protect our forests and prevent the pollution of water.

Government undertook legislation in the winter session of Parliament to establish a National Housing Bank. One of its major tasks will be to

finance housing for the weaker sections. In this session, Government will bring forward a National Housing Policy for providing dwellings for the unsheltered millions.

A major item of the Twenty Point Programme is the development of a more responsive administration, especially in its interface with the weaker sections. A series of workshops of District Collectors on the subject of responsive administration is being held. The machinery for the redressal of public grievances is being strengthened. Special programmes are being organised to train officials of the District Planning Cells.

Plans to provide speedy and inexpensive justice for the underprivileged made headway. A Committee, with the Chief Justice of India as Patron-in-Chief, has been entrusted with the implementation of legal aid schemes.

A new impetus was given last year to the drive against smuggling, foreign exchange racketeering and drug trafficking. The Central Economic Intelligence Bureau is coming down hard on syndicates of smugglers and racketeers.

The menace of drugs is assuming worrying proportions. If we are not careful, the flower of our youth could be endangered, the physical and moral fibre of the nation could be sapped. We are determined to fight this evil. The Narcotics Control Bureau made major seizures of drugs during the year. Programmes have been launched for the de-addiction and rehabilitation of the unfortunate victims of drug abuse.

We are consciously directing science and technology to the removal of poverty, particulary in rural India. This is the aim of our five technology missions. The tasks assigned to these five missions are: to provide potable water to all villages in the country; to immunise 20 million pregnant women and 18 million infants against vaccine-preventable diseases; to impart functional literacy to 30 million adults; to augment the production of oilseeds and edible oil; and to provide increased access to telecommunication services. These missions have formulated their operational plans for 1988-89 and 1989-90. The plans are being closely monitored and carefully evaluated.

Government have adopted the approach of integrated energy for rural areas. Natural and perennial sources of energy like solar, wind, biomass, mini-hydel sources and improved chulhas are being popularised.

Oil exploration and exploitation are being intensified. Refining capacity will be further augmented. A Centre for High Technology has been established to acquire, develop and adapt modern technologies in refineries. The first section of the HBJ pipeline was completed during the year.

Significant strides have been made in electronics. India has emerged as one of the few countries with its own technology for manufacturing electronic exchanges. Software exports are shaping up as a major new area of growth.

In nuclear science, we are among the few with a mastery of the complete nuclear fuel cycle for the production of nuclear power. A landmark in this area has been the designing of 500 MW e-capacity reactors. The Nuclear Power Corporation has been established to enhance the nuclear power programme.

August 1987 was a landmark in our effort to develop capabilities in seabed mining. The Preparatory Commission of the International Seabed Authority registered India's claim for a mine site in the Indian Ocean for exploration and development. It is a matter of pride that India is the first country to be granted such a claim by the Authority.

The first Indian Remote Sensing Satellite, designed and developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), is being launched next month by a Soviet launcher. The second flight of the augmented Satellite Launch Vehicle with the SROSS-II satellite will be launched in April. This satellite will carry a joint ISRO-West German payload. In June, our communication satellite INSAT-1C will be launched on the French Ariane launcher.

Our economy has demonstrated its resilience in the face of one of the worst climatic set-backs in memory, namely the wide spread drought in most parts of the country and the floods in the eastern region. We have stood up well to the challenge and warded off a crisis because the development strategy followed by Indira Gandhi, and the new initiatives of the past three years, have imparted an intrinsic strength to our economy. We will ensure the restoration of momentum in agricultural growth as soon as normalcy returns to climatic conditions.

About 45 million hectares of land spread over 269 districts in 15 States and 6 Union Territories was affected by the drought. In many areas, it was the second successive year of failure of rains; in some, the third or the fourth. A shortfall of 7 to 10 per cent in foodgrains production, as compared to the 1986-87 level, is apprehended. A comprehensive strategy was evolved to combat the impact of the drought. Central relief assistance was expeditiously provided to the States for employment, drinking water and the supply of fodder. The flow of essential commodities through the Public Distribution System was greatly expanded. A package of debt relief and additional credit assistance was made available to farmers. For those affected for three or more years, this included a moratorium on principal and interest payments. A strategy for maximising *rabi* production has been adopted.

We have always believed that the nation can be strong only if the farmer and farming are strengthened. Our quest for self-reliance in foodgrains has served us well. We built substantial buffer stocks. These have helped us tide over difficult situations. In recent years, rice productivity has increased in the Eastern States covered by the Special Rice Production

Programme. Government are making determined efforts to ensure that foodgrains output reaches 175 million tonnes by the end of the Seventh Plan. Emphasis will be placed on increasing the productivity of dry land farming. A Task Force has been set up to work out the details of the strategy. A recent innovation is agricultural planning on the basis of agro-climatic zones.

The funds needed for drought relief greatly exceeded the amount originally budgeted. It became necessary to take fiscal counter-measures to check inflationary pressures. A temporary surcharge was introduced on Income Tax, Wealth Tax, Corporation Tax and Customs Duty. Strict economy was enforced in public expenditure. The Reserve Bank also took measures to mop up excess liquidity in the banking system and tighten selective controls. Inflationary pressures have been much less than in earlier droughts. In 1979-80 the Wholesale Price Index had risen by over 21 per cent. In contrast, the increase upto the third week of January 1988 has been only 9.8 per cent.

The performance of the industrial sector has been commendable. It reflects the success of Government policies in stimulating investment and production, and promoting technological upgradation. A special tribute is due to our industrial workers who responded well to the call for raising productivity. Since 1984-85, industry has grown at a rate between 8.5 to 9 per cent per annum. The momentum continued into 1987-88 with the general index of industrial production showing a growth of 10.2 per cent in April-November 1987. For the year as a whole, it is likely to exceed 8 per cent as the effects of the drought become evident in the non-agricultural sectors. The small-scale sector has contributed significantly to the rapid growth of industry in this period. A National Equity Fund has been established to provide financial support to small-scale manufacturing units. The Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction, set up under the Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Act, 1987 became operational last May.

The infrastructure, which is almost exclusively in the public sector, has performed very well. This segment of the economy had shown healthy growth in 1986-87, with power generation expanding by 10.2 per cent, coal by 7.5 per cent and railway freight by 7.4 per cent. All these continued to show their strong performance in the current year. Power generation in April-December 1987 was 7.6 per cent higher than the previous year, despite a substantial decrease in hydel generation due to drought. Thermal power generation grew by 16.1 per cent. The Plant Load Factor in April-December 1987 has averaged 55 per cent, compared with 52.2 per cent during the same period in the previous year. The growth rate in coal in the first 9 months of 1987-88 was 10.2 per cent. Railway freight expanded by 5.4 per cent.

The public sector occupies the commanding heights of the national economy. It safeguards the economic independence of India. It must and will continue to play this pivotal role in our development strategy of building socialism. For this very reason, Government have stressed the need for improving its efficiency and financial viability. We are giving the public sector greater operational autonomy through Memoranda of Understanding.

The balance of payments position has been managed successfully despite a difficult external situation. Government's efforts at promoting exports have yielded results. Exports have shown a healthy growth of 24.7 per cent in value terms in the first nine months of the year, while the increase in imports has been kept at 13.5 per cent. The trade deficit over April-December 1987 was lower than the deficit in the same period last year. Government will keep the balance of payments position under close watch.

Central Sector Plan outlays have been ahead of Seventh Plan targets. While this is gratifying, we have to pay much closer attention to the achievement of physical targets. The Mid-Term Review of the Seventh Plan has been completed by the Planning Commission and will shortly be presented to the National Development Council and Parliament.

From the earliest times, the Indian mind has transcended "narrow domestic walls" and seen all of humanity as one large family. Ours is a millennial heritage of tolerance and compassion, of the self-confident assimilation and synthesis of all that is best, from wherever it comes. Our struggle for freedom was guided by the ancient principles of truth, of non-violence and of humanity as one. The basic tenets of our foreign policy derive from this integrated and deeply entrenched world-view. The philosophy and practice of Non-alignment is modern India's outstanding contribution to contemporary international relations. It was a philosophy conceived and elaborated by those great men of vision, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. First a minority view, deprecated and even derided, it has grown to embrace two-thirds of the international community, profoundly influencing thinking people everywhere, crucially contributing to the shaping of a new world order. Our foreign policy has safeguarded our sovereignty, promoted our national interests and made a vital contribution to the building of a just, equitable and democratic world order. We believe in the peaceful resolution of international disputes. We seek the enlargement of our friendship and co-operation with all countries. We are committed to the promotion of peaceful co-existence and nuclear disarmament.

While defence strategists remained mired in obsolete concepts of deterrence, in a world threatened with extinction by nuclear weapons, on the very morrow of Hiroshima, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru grasped the catastrophic implications of the advent of nuclear weapons. The elimination of these weapons became a principal plank of independent

India's foreign policy. Throughout the last forty years, India has worked steadfastly for a non-violent world without nuclear weapons. The Six-Nation Initiative, in which Indira Gandhi played a leading part, contributed significantly to the resumption of the deadlocked disarmament negotiations. The initiative has mobilised opinion world-wide in favour of nuclear disarmament. It has helped set the stage for the agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union signed in Washington last December on the elimination of land-based intermediate and short-range missiles. While welcoming this agreement as a historic first step towards nuclear disarmament, we have emphasised the need to ensure rapid progress towards further and substantial reductions in nuclear arsenals, and the induction of all nuclear-weapon powers into the process. The Stockholm Summit of the Six-Nation Initiative last month spelt out the steps which need to be taken in the wake of the INF treaty with a view to ensuring the global elimination of all nuclear weapons within a specified period of time.

Our future is also threatened by the growing degradation of the environment. We must ensure environmentally sustainable development. We support international efforts to realize this objective. We hosted a meeting of the World Commission on Environment and Development. The Prime Minister addressed the United Nations during the special debate on the Commission's Report.

In July 1987, we concluded the historic Indo-Sri Lanka agreement which has been welcomed in Tamil Nadu and all other parts of India as the harbinger of peace in Sri Lanka and justice for the Tamil minority in that country. The agreement has been internationally acclaimed as an act of the highest statesmanship. The provisions of the agreement meet all the legitimate aspirations of the Sri Lanka Tamil minority while ensuring the unity and integrity of Sri Lanka. The agreement paves the way for durable peace and stability in that country. It meets important security concerns of ours and strengthens Non-alignment in our region. As provided for in the agreement, and in response to the urgent request of President Jayawardene, the Indian Peace Keeping Force was sent to Sri Lanka. They have done an outstanding job in the most difficult circumstances. We pay tribute to our gallant soldiers. To those who have made the supreme sacrifice, we pledge that their sacrifice shall not be in vain. We are firmly resolved to secure the full implementation of all provisions of the agreement. We are giving further momentum to the processes envisaged under it. We are ensuring that the objective of achieving a durable solution to the ethnic problem in Sri Lanka is realized in full measure.

Regional co-operation in South Asia is an important dimension of our foreign policy and of growing significance in our region. Under our Chairmanship, regional cooperation was consolidated and several major initiatives were promoted. The third Summit at Kathmandu carried forward

the process. We must realise the immense untapped potential for South Asian co-operation.

The peoples of India and Pakistan share much in common. We wish the people of Pakistan well. We want to promote trust and friendship through greater interaction between our peoples. We hope the Government of Pakistan will reciprocate our sentiments and help create the atmosphere for enduring peace and friendship. Unfortunately, our efforts in this direction have been hampered, and many of our initiatives thwarted. Pakistan continues its clandestine efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. They also continue to assist terrorist and secessionist elements in India. Is this the path of friendship and co-operation? My Government still believe that reason and good sense will prevail and the Pakistan Government will make a fresh assessment of its policy towards India.

We attach importance to building friendly relations with China. Outstanding issues have to be resolved in an amicable manner, consistent with our national interest. It is important to maintain peace and tranquillity along the border.

We support the continuing efforts of the Secretary General of the United Nations on Afghanistan. There are signs of positive movement, although hurdles are being put in the way of a settlement. We welcome the announcement made by General Secretary Gorbachev regarding the withdrawal of Soviet troops in accordance with the stipulated schedule. We hope the forthcoming proximity talks at Geneva will lead to a final settlement. We have been in touch with the parties concerned. We will work together with them to ensure the status of Afghanistan as a sovereign, independent and non-aligned country.

The travails of the Kampuchean people have caused us much distress. We have followed with sympathy and deep interest the efforts of the Kampucheans to rebuild their country, protect their independence and sovereignty, and safeguard their non-aligned status. We are helping in the peace process. We have contributed towards bringing together those who must jointly work out a solution to the Kampuchean question. We shall continue our efforts in cooperation with the parties concerned.

We have been deeply sympathetic to the cause of the Palestinian people since the days of our freedom movement. The partition of India and the partition of Palestine took place in the same year. We have stood by the Palestinian people through their trials and tribulations and the terrible suffering they have undergone. We deeply deplore the brutal repression of Palestinians by Israeli forces in the Occupied Territories. There can be no solution that ignores the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. They must have a State of their own in their homeland. To find a lasting solution, an International Peace Conference should be immediately convened, with

the participation of the Palestine Liberation Organisation and others concerned.

The Iran-Iraq war is a matter of great sorrow. It has led to an increasingly volatile situation in our neighbourhood and the proliferation of external military presences in the region. We shall continue our work with others in the arduous search for peace.

Apartheid is a blot on civilization, repugnant to our commitment to the unity of the human family. Since Mahatma Gandhi's early experiments with truth in South Africa, the elimination of racial discrimination has been an integral part of our freedom struggle and as yet an unfulfilled mission of our foreign policy. Apartheid survives because of the economic and military sustenance which Pretoria receives from a few rich and powerful countries. The only way of ending this abomination without too much bloodshed is through comprehensive, mandatory sanctions under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter. We have striven for this at the UN, Non-aligned and in Commonwealth forums. All Commonwealth countries, with one exception, agreed at the Vancouver Summit last October to intensify their sanctions against apartheid. The AFRICA Fund, which we conceived of as a practical measure of support, has received a gratifying response from countries all over the world.

The moves in Fiji to deprive people of their rights solely on a racial basis have caused deep resentment. Fiji's constitutional arrangements must ensure fair and just representation in Parliament for all communities.

We welcome the agreement signed in Guatemala by leaders of five Central American countries. We earnestly hope the agreement will lead to a just and lasting settlement ensuring the security, sovereignty and independence of all States of the region.

There has been substantial progress in our bilateral relations with the United States of America, particularly in the technological and economic fields. The Prime Minister had wide-ranging talks with the US President. We continue to impress upon the United States the seriousness of our concern about the supply of armaments to Pakistan notwithstanding that country's relentless pursuit of nuclear weapons.

India's relations with the Soviet Union have always been warm and friendly. The Delhi Declaration of November 1986 affirmed the common commitment of both countries to non-violence and peaceful co-existence. In the last three years, we have enlarged and enriched the content of our relationship. There has been an unprecedented increase in high-level visits, an unparalleled expansion of trade, and new dimensions and new vistas added in areas such as science and technology, further expanding our already wide ranging co-operation. The mutual goodwill of our peoples has

found spectacular expression in the Festivals held in the two countries. During the year, the Prime Minister of India visited the Soviet Union and the Prime Minister of the Soviet Union visited India.

Honourable Members, with the united endeavour of the nation we can meet with confidence the challenges that confront us and accomplish the tasks that lie ahead. We shall be faithful to the ideals and goals of our Republic. We shall place the national good above any sectional interest. I wish you all success in your endeavours in the year before us.

Jai Hind.